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## Current Opinion

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### Must All Revivals be Musical?

Current literature is full of the accounts of the Welsh revival. It has been studied by newspaper men, preachers, and W. T. Stead. It is certainly to be counted as the work of the Holy Spirit. Just as truly, however, it is also the work of the Welsh temperament. So far as we can judge from all reports, it lacks intellectual elements and is largely emotional. In certain particulars the conduct of those in various meetings is not unlike that at which Paul hints in his description of the "gift of tongues." A speaker is interrupted by an outburst of song or by the announcement that someone has been saved. All are urged to be led wholly by the Spirit, but it is just as truly a revival of song. Such an expression of religious enthusiasm would never be expected anywhere except among people of the Welsh temperament. Certainly it would not be expected in America.

For this, if for no other reason, the revival is not typical. Yet it is normal in that it discloses a great law: Religious experience and the influence of God's spirit are conditioned by the mental and social peculiarities of a community. A man does not need to be musical to become a Christian. The Holy Spirit is just as truly present among men who cannot burst out into singing, and who prefer to devote themselves to Christian thought or social service, as he is among the exuberantly musical Welsh. Religious revivals need not be all alike any more than human beings need be all alike. In our thankfulness over the great movement in Wales, we ought not to forget this very elemental fact. There is danger that some of us may have such hard and fast ideals for a revival that we may not know one even when it is upon us.

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### Recognizing the Atmospheric Conditions of the Gospel

Professor Bernhard Weiss has been teaching for fifty years. He began his career with a lecture on "The Relation of Exegesis to Biblical Theology." He closes his academic year of jubilee with a volume upon *The Religion of the New Testament*. It is an interesting illustration of the adjustment of biblical theology to the demands of dogmatic. Its value as a whole is, of course, great, but there is in his discussion of the Scripture one statement which is especially significant: "The New Testament writers share the same general world of thought prevalent in their times; and must do so; for they would not have been understood by their contemporaries for

whom they wrote, if they had had different ideas from their readers on matters of geography, history, or the phenomena of nature." This statement should become an exegetical obsession. The curse of much of current theology is that it utterly ignores the historical atmosphere through which New Testament truth is to be seen; or, to change the figure, it would make the truth of the gospel walk among men in the dress it wore in the time of Jesus and Paul. No wonder it seems anachronistic to everybody except people who are themselves anachronisms.

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### Can We Save "the People"?

Dr. William Henry Burns has just written a little book on *The Higher Critic's Bible or God's Bible*. Its character can be guessed from its title. The book is not important enough in itself to require much attention, but it emphasizes an opinion which has become a chief weapon of defense for those who do not want to accept the results of current biblical scholarship; viz.: the hope of the church lies in the common people. Dr. Burns says the common people "are to be trusted today. They want neither a priestly hierarchy nor a scholarly oligarchy to take charge of biblical interpretation; nor will they be content to wait until German experts shall have decided as to the origin of the Pentateuch before they report on the Ten Commandments; or wait to hear the latest views of the German Kaiser before they accept the Bible as a Divine Revelation." Why should they? Certainly no person representing the critical school wants them to. As a matter of fact, it is the traditional school that insists that the authenticity of portions of the Scripture be fixed before they can be believed. The great difficulty in today's theological world is that its "people" means simply the members of the *bourgeois* class; i. e., those well-to-do or semi-well-to-do members of society whose interests are not those of laboring-men. They do not constitute "the people" as a whole. On both sides of the church membership there is rapidly developing a group of men who intelligently or unintelligently are in sympathy with such views as those which Haeckel champions. It is idle to attempt to get these men, whether found among the professional class or among the labor unions, to listen to any teaching which demands at the outset a surrender to the doctrine of biblical inerrancy. They can be reached only by those in whose scientific knowledge and undogmatic temper they have confidence. And they will not be stampeded into reactionary conservatism by hearing a view called German. The situation is serious. It is time that Christian scholars stopped their internecine warfare and united against the common enemy—materialism, commercialism, and sensuous pleasure. A human soul is worth more than a theory of inspiration.